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What Caused THE DETROIT RIOT?

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An Analysis

by WALTER WHITE *and* THURGOOD MARSHALL

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PREFACE

On June 20 a race riot erupted in Detroit—arsenal of democracy—which took the lives of thirty-four Detroiters. Because this tragedy can happen in other American cities, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People publishes herewith a two-part, detailed analysis of the riot and its causes.

Long before the riot came, the N.A.A.C.P. worked indefatigably to arouse public opinion regarding the impending danger and to get public officials to act against police brutality, mob attacks upon the homes and persons of Negro citizens, job discrimination, and other inequities based upon color. More than a year before the riot the Office of War Information had warned that "all hell will break loose in Detroit" unless positive action were taken by public officials. LIFE MAGAZINE in August, 1942, had published a nine-page illustrated warning under the caption, "Detroit Is Dynamite". But boom town profits, political exigencies, and other factors had stopped corrective action.

It is hoped that the facts as set forth in the succeeding pages will help to arouse both public officials and private citizens to the necessity of action not alone as a war measure but to prevent other Detroits in the post-war years. These are inevitable unless courage and intelligence are exhibited by both white and Negro Americans.

WALTER WHITE, Secretary
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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WHAT CAUSED THE DETROIT RIOTS?

Section I

by Walter White

In 1916 there were 8,000 Negroes in Detroit's population of 536,650. In 1925 the number of Negroes in Detroit had been multiplied by ten to a total of 85,000. In 1940, the total had jumped to 149,119. In June, 1943, between 190,000 and 200,000 lived in the Motor City.

According to the War Manpower Commission, approximately 500,000 in-migrants moved to Detroit between June, 1940, and June, 1943. Because of discrimination against employment of Negroes in industry, the overwhelming majority—between 40,000 and 50,000—of the approximately 50,000 Negroes who went to Detroit in this three-year period moved there during the fifteen months prior to the race riot of June, 1943. According to Governor Harry S. Kelly, of Michigan, a total of 345,000 persons moved into Detroit during that same fifteen-month period. There was comparatively little out-migration as industry called for more and more workers in one of the tightest labor markets in the United States. The War Manpower Commission failed almost completely to enforce its edict that no in-migration be permitted into any industrial area until all available local labor was utilized. Thus a huge reservoir of Negro labor existed in Detroit, crowded into highly-congested slum areas. But they did have housing of a sort and this labor was already in Detroit. The coming of white workers recruited chiefly in the South not only gravely complicated the housing, transportation, educational and recreation facilities of Detroit, but they brought with them the traditional prejudices of Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and other Deep South states against the Negro.

The sudden increase in Negro in-migration was due to labor scarcity which forced employers to hire Negroes, or be unable to fill government orders. The same circumstance—plus governmental and community pressures—created the necessity for modest upgrading of competent Negroes. One of the most important factors in bringing about such promotions was the unequivocal position taken by the top leadership of the United Automobile Workers—CIO.

According to the Research and Analysis Department of the UAW-CIO, the United States Employment Service, the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, and the Detroit branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the overwhelming majority of the 250,000 to 300,000 white in-migrants to Detroit during the year immediately preceding the race riot came from the South. There was no surplus labor in nearby industrial centers like Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Toledo, Akron, and Kansas City. Recruiting, therefore, was concentrated in the Deep South with the result that the already high percentage of Detroiters with South background was enormously increased. Here and there among these Southern whites were members of the UAW-CIO and other labor unions, churchmen and others who sloughed off whatever racial prejudices they had brought with them from the South. But the overwhelming majority retained and even increased

their hostility to Negroes. This was particularly noticeable when Negroes were forced by sheer necessity to purchase or rent houses outside the so-called Negro area. For years preceding the riot, there had been mob attacks dating back as far as the famous Sweet case in 1925 upon the homes of Negroes. In some instances there had been police connivance in these attacks. In practically no cases had there been arrests of whites who had stoned or bombed the homes of Negroes. During July, 1941, there had been an epidemic of riots allegedly by Polish youths which had terrorized colored residents in Detroit, Hamtramck and other sections in and about Detroit. Homes of Negroes on Horton, Chippewa, West Grand Boulevard and other streets close to but outside of the so-called Negro areas were attacked by mobs with no police interference.

Detroit's 200,000 Negroes are today largely packed into two segregated areas. The larger of these is on the East Side bounded by Jefferson on the South, John R. on the West, East Grand Boulevard on the North, and Russell on the East. This area covers approximately 60 square blocks. A somewhat smaller Negro area is on the West Side bounded by Epworth Boulevard on the West, West Warren on the South, Grand River on the East along a line running Northwest to West Grand Boulevard and Tireman —an area of approximately 30 square blocks. In addition to these two wholly Negro areas, there are scattered locations throughout Detroit of mixed occupancy in which, significantly, there was during the riot less friction than in any other area.

The desparate scarcity of housing for whites, however, limited Negroes in finding places to live outside of the Negro areas. The Detroit newspapers have contained for months many advertisements offering rewards for housing of any nature or quality for whites. Meantime, but little public housing was created to meet the tragic need for housing of both whites and Negroes in Detroit. Even this was characterized by shameful vacillation and weakness in Washington which only added fuel to the flames of racial tension in Detroit. The notorious riots revolving about the question of who should occupy the Sojourner Truth Housing project in February, 1942, are an example of this. These riots resulted when fascist elements, emboldened by the vacillation of the National Housing Administration which reversed itself several times on Negro occupancy, joined with pressure of real estate interests to bring to a head the mob violence which led to the smashing of the furniture and beating of Negro tenants attempting to move into the project.

Previously, the Public Workers Administration had built the Brewster Project of 701 units in 1938 to which the United States Housing Authority had added the Brewster addition of 240 units completed in 1940 and 1941. All these provided housing for only about 3,000 Negroes, however.

From all other public housing projects erected in Detroit, Negroes were totally excluded, although Negroes and whites had lived together in complete amity in some of the areas on which these public housing projects, erected through the taxation of Negro as well as white Americans, were built.

Equally contributory to the explosion which was to come has been the attitude of the Detroit Real Estate Association. Mention has already been made of the opposition of the real estate interests to public housing in Detroit. Their contention was that such housing as Detroit needed should be created by private interests. But by the time private interests were ready to begin erection of homes and apartments for the greatly augmented population of wartime Detroit, priorities on building materials were put into effect. Meantime, every train, bus, or other public conveyance entering Detroit disgorged an ever increasing torrent of men, women, and children demanding places to live while they earned the war wages Detroit factories were paying. Overcrowding, lack of sanitation, a mounting disease rate resulting in absenteeism and a severe tax on the hospital and clinical facilities of Detroit were bad enough among whites. Among Negroes it resulted in a scandalous condition.

JOBS

Early in June, 1943, 25,000 employes of the Packard Plant, which was making Rolls-Royce engines for American bombers and marine engines for the famous PT boats, ceased work in protest against the upgrading of three Negroes. Subsequent investigation indicated that only a relatively small percentage of the Packard workers actually wanted to go on strike. The UAW-CIO bitterly fought the strike. But a handful of agitators charged by R. J. Thomas, president of the UAW-CIO, with being members of the Ku Klux Klan, had whipped up sentiment particularly among the Southern whites employed by Packard against the promotion of Negro workers. During the short-lived strike, a thick Southern voice outside the plant harangued a crowd shouting, "I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win than work beside a nigger on the assembly line." The strike was broken by the resolute attitude of the union and of Col. George E. Strong of the United States Aircraft procurement Division, who refused to yield to the demand that the three Negroes be down-graded. Certain officials of the Packard Company were clearly responsible in part for the strike. C. E. Weiss, Personnel Manager, George Schwartz, General Foreman, and Robert Watts of the Personnel Division, urged the strikers to hold out in their demand that Negroes not be hired or upgraded. Weiss is alleged to have told the men that they did not have to work beside Negroes. At the time this report is written, Weiss, Schwartz, and Watts are still employed by the Packard Motor Car Company. The racial hatred created, released, and crystallized by the Packard strike played a considerable role in the race riot which was soon to follow. It also was the culmination of a long and bitter fight to prevent the employment of Negroes in wartime industry. These had been innumerable instances, unpublicized, in the Detroit area of work stoppages and slow downs by white workers, chiefly from the South, and of Polish and Italian extraction. Trivial reasons for these stoppages had been given by the workers when in reality they were in protest against employment or promotion of Negroes. A vast number of man hours and of production had been irretrievably lost through these stoppages. John S. Bugas in charge of the Detroit office of the FBI, states that his investigations prove that the Ku Klux Klan at no time has

had more than 3,000 members in Detroit. Other investigations by officials and private agencies corroborate this fact. But the Klan did not need to be a large organization to cause serious disruption of war production in Detroit, because of the circumstance already mentioned—the increasing percentage of Southern whites who went to Detroit to work during 1942 and 1943.

The Willow Run Bomber plant is typical in this connection. This plant employed in July 45,000 workers. An analysis of its employes revealed that 30% came from outside the Detroit area, and 20.3% were last employed outside of Michigan. Between 40% and 50% of those employed in July, 1943, at Willow Run came originally from the Deep South. In July, practically all of the new hires were Southern. The labor turnover at Willow Run has been exceedingly high. So too has been the number of work stoppages whose real cause is opposition to employment of Negroes. Because of wartime censorship, it was impossible to ascertain the number of such episodes or the loss of production caused by it. But it is reasonable to assume that the experience at Willow Run has been characteristic of a large number of other Detroit plants. The activities of the Ku Klux Klan under the name of the Forrest Club of which "Uncle Charlie" Spare seems to be the spokesman, has had its numbers and agents industriously organizing anti-

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The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U. S. Department of Labor lists the strikes in Detroit to prevent employment and upgrading of colored workers for the three-month period March 1, 1943, through May 31, 1943. This record shows that 101,955 man-days or 2,446,920 man-hours of war production were lost by these stoppages. The record is as follows:

March 1, 1943 through May 31, 1943

	Company	Beginning date	Number of workers involved	Man-days idle	Issue
1.	U. S. Rubber Company.	March 19	1,064	3,955	Hiring colored workers and demand for separate sanitary facilities.
2.	Vickers, Inc.	March 25	40	60	Colored help placed in Production Department.
3.	Hudson Motor Car Co.	April 20	15	45	Hiring of colored plant guards.
4.	Hudson Naval Arsenal	May 17	750	750	Refusal to work with colored tool-maker.
5.	Packard Motor Car Co.	May 26	26,883	97,145	Upgrading of colored workers.

Negro sentiment among those with racial prejudice against the Negro in several of the Detroit plants. "Strikes" against the employment or promotion of Negroes can be traced to these agitators in the Dodge Truck plant, the Hudson Arsenal, the Packard Plant, and other plants. The Klan has been

active in Detroit as far back as the early 20's. Early in the 20's it almost succeeded in electing a Mayor of Detroit. It was shortly after this disaster was averted that a series of attacks upon the homes of Negroes took place, culminating in the Sweet case in 1925. Following this case tried before Judge Frank Murphy and in which the defendants were represented by the late Clarence Darrow, the Klan in Detroit dropped out of existence, along with its demise in other parts of the country. But agencies with similar methods and ideologies succeeded it. Though shortlived, a vicious successor was the notorious Black Legion which was characterized by Professor Elmer Akers, of the University of Michigan, in 1937 in his "A Social-Psychological Interpretation of the Black Legion" as a movement of "Vigilante nativism," which began as an offshot of the Ku Klux Klan.

Originally conceived to secure and insure jobs for white Southerners, the organization soon expanded its fields of activity to include putting down by violence, if necessary, all movements the Black Legion decided were "alien" or "un-American." After the conviction of its leader, Virgil F. Effinger, former Klansman, for the murder in 1936 of Charles A. Poole, a Detroit Catholic, the 4-year-old, crime-besmirched Black Legion virtually expired, but was followed quickly by others of similar purpose and method, among them The National Workers League (held chiefly responsible for the Sojourner Truth riot which saw the League's Parker Sage, Garland Alderman and Virgil Chandler indicted but never tried on charges of seditious conspiracy) which is reputedly financed in part by Nazi Bund and Silver Shirt money.

Gerald L. K. Smith, former assistant and protege of the late Huey Long, has been long active in stirring up discord and dissension in the Detroit area. His activities in America First, anti-union, and other similar groups have been greatly increased in effectiveness by his also being a Southerner trained in the art of demagogy by Huey Long, and provided with a fertile field due to the predominantly Southern white psychology of Detroit. Active also have been the followers of Father Coughlin, some Polish and Italian Catholic priests and laymen, and others who, wittingly or otherwise, have utilized anti-Negro sentiment for selfish and sometimes sinister objectives in much the same manner that the Nazis utilized anti-Semitism in Germany during the late 20's. Ingrained or stimulated prejudice against the Negro has been used as much against organized labor as it has been against the Negro. Employers and employers associations have been apathetic to the storm which was brewing. Apparently they were interested only in the size and continuation of profits. It has been frequently charged and not disproved that some of the employers have financed or contributed heavily to some of the organizations which have organized and capitalized upon race prejudice as a means of checking the organization of workers in Detroit plants.

DETROIT LABOR UNIONS AND THE NEGRO

One of the most extraordinary phenomena of the riot was the fact that while mobs attacked Negro victims outside some of the industrial plants of Detroit, there was not only no physical clash inside any plant in Detroit but not as far as could be learned even any verbal clash between white and

Negro workers. This can be attributed to two factors: first, a firm stand against discrimination and segregation of Negro workers by the UAW-CIO, particularly since the Ford strike of 1941. The second factor is that when the military took over, the armed guards in the plants were ordered by the Army to maintain order at all costs and to prevent any outbreak within the plants. There is possibly a third factor, namely, that on Monday, June 21st, and to a lesser extent on succeeding days, Negroes were unable to get to the plants because of attacks upon them when they sought to return to work by roving mobs chiefly composed of boys between the ages of 17 and 25.

The Detroit riot brought into sharp focus one of the most extraordinary labor situations in the United States. Prior to the Ford strike of 1941 many Negroes in Detroit considered Ford their "great white father" because the Ford plant almost alone of Detroit industries employed Negroes. When the UAW-CIO and the UAW-AFL sought to organize Ford workers, their approach at the beginning was a surreptitious one. The unions felt that the very high percentage of Southern whites in Detroit would refuse to join the Union if Negroes were too obviously participating. But when the strike broke, far-sighted Negro leaders in Detroit took an unequivocal position in behalf of the organization of workers. A serious racial clash was averted by the intercession of thoughtful whites and Negroes. Following the winning of the NLRB election by the union, it began to take a broader and more unequivocal position that all workers and union members should share in the benefits of union agreements irrespective of race, creed, or color.

During the recent riot, R. J. Thomas, president of the UAW-CIO proposed an eight-point program which was widely published, and which helped to emphasize the basic causes of the riot. These points included: (1) creation of a special grand jury to investigate the cause of the riots and to return justifiable indictments, with a competent Negro attorney appointed as an assistant Prosecutor of work with the grand jury; (2) immediate construction and opening of adequate park and recreation facilities. Thomas called it "disgraceful that the City's normal, inadequate park space was permitted to be overtaxed further by the influx of hundreds of thousands of new war workers;" (3) immediate and practical plans for rehousing Negro slum dwellers in decent, Government-financed housing developments; (4) insistence that plant managements as well as workers recognize the right of Negroes to jobs in line with their skill and seniority; (5) a full investigation by the special grand jury of he conduct of the Police Department during the riots: (6) special care by the courts in dealing with many persons arrested. Those found guilty should be severely punished, and there must be no discrimination between white and Negro rioters; (7) the loss of homes and small businesses, as well as personal injuries, is the responsibility of the community, and the city should create a fund to make good these losses; (8) creation by the Mayor of a special biracial committee of ten persons to make further recommendations looking toward elimination of racial differences and frictions, this committee to have a special job in connection with high schools "where racial hatred has been permitted to grow and thrive in recent years."

VACILLATION ON FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE COMMITTEE

A contributory factor to the breakdown of discrimination in employment in Detroit was the issuance on June 25, 1941, by President Roosevelt of Executive Order 8802 under which was established the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice. Although limited in personnel, budget and authority, the FEPC as the affirmative expression of a moral principle had strengthened the efforts to eliminate discrimination in Detroit war plants. Members of the FEPC staff had carefully investigated charges of discrimination in Detroit areas. In a considerable number of cases negotiation with employers by FEPC representatives had resulted in the abolishing or lessening of discrimination. Employers, employes and labor unions knew that the Federal Government was opposed to denial of the right to work or to be upgraded on account of race, creed, color or national origin.

But in the summer of 1942, the FEPC was robbed of its independent status and placed under the control of the War Manpower Commission. The conviction in Detroit and other places began to grow that the FEPC was being quietly shelved and that the government no longer was insistent that discrimination in employment be abolished. This conviction grew as the FEPC became more and more inactive due to the failure to provide it with a budget for many months during the summer and fall of 1942 and during the period when it was stopped from functioning affectively.

Conviction crystallized into certainly when early in 1943, the Detroit railroad and Mexican hearings were indefinitely postponed. This certainty was fixed more definitely in the public mind by the long delay in selecting a new Chairman of the FEPC and defining its status and the nature of the sanctions with which it would be armed. As the FEPC lapsed into total inactivity fear of Federal action died among those who were guilty of discrimination. Anti-Negro organizations and individuals renewed and increased their agitation against the employment and upgrading of Negroes. Despair deepened in the Negro communities as they saw hordes of Southern whites imported into Detroit, provided with such housing as was available including tax-supported houses, apartments and dormitories, speedily upgraded to the better paid jobs while Negroes who had lived in Detroit for many years were still shut out.

Morale and morals of Negroes were affected adversely as they saw the one agency which had been created to do away with discrimination emasculated. Those Negroes who were employed found themselves with money they could not spend for decent houses or other improvements in their living standards. Some invested in War Bonds and insurance; others threw away their money in riotous living because they had been robbed of hope.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Politically minded public officials have winked at the activities of agencies like the Klan, the Black Legion, the National Workers' League, the followers

of Father Coughlin and other similar groups. During the 30's especially when there was keen competition for jobs because of the depression, Southern whites sought and secured jobs on the police force of Detroit and in the courts. There was a period of years when cold-blooded killings of Negroes by policemen were a constant source of bitterness among Negroes. Eventually, protest by such organizations as the Detroit branch of the NAACP and other Negro and inter-racial groups led to a diminution and eventually a practical cessation of such killings. But a residue of distrust of the police remained. When the riot of June, 1943, broke forth, this suspicion of the police by Negroes was more than justified when 29 of the 35 killed were Negroes, 17 of them shot by police and a number of these shot in the back. The justification usually given by the police was "looting." There is no question that shameful and inexcusable looting of stores operated by whites in the East Side Negro area, particularly on Hastings and John R Streets was perpetrated by Negroes. Part of this looting was for the sake of the loot. But part was due to bitter frenzy which had been too long bottled up in Negroes, and which was a form of vengeance both against the prejudice in Detroit from which Negroes had suffered, and against the looting of Negro homes and businesses ten days before in the Beaumont, Tex., riot of June 15-16, 1943.

Samuel Leiberman of the East Side Merchants Association reports that white policemen joined Negroes in the looting of stores on the East Side. In one instance a policeman carried two twenty-five-pound cans of lard from a store and locked it in the back of the police patrol car to be transported, apparently, to his home. There also is evidence that at least one of the 17 Negroes shot for "looting" was not looting, nor was there any evidence to substantiate such a charge.

The wilful inefficiency of the Detroit police in its handling of the riot is one of the most disgraceful episodes in American history. When the riot broke out on Sunday night, June 20, following a dispute between a white and Negro motorist on the Belle Isle Bridge, an efficient police force armed with night sticks and fire hoses could have broken up the rioting on Woodward Avenue and broken the back of the insurrection, had the police been determined to do so. Instead, the police did little or nothing, though there were a few individual instances of courage by policemen which are commendable.

More typical, however, was the following episode: An official of the Detroit educational system was riding Monday afternoon, June 21st, on a Woodward Avenue car. According to his statement, an inspector of police boarded the car with eight patrolmen. He announced that a mob was headed in that direction and that he and the patrolmen would take charge of and protect any Negroes on the car who wished such protection. Four of the eight Negroes accepted the offer. The other four chose to remain on the car. They crouched on the floor of the car and were concealed by the skirts of sympathetic white women. These four got to their destinations safely. But the four who had entrusted themselves to the police were either taken from

the police by the mob and beaten unmercifully, or were turned over to the mob by the police.

After Federal troops had restored a semblance of order to Detroit, Police Commissioner John W. Witherspoon sought to shift the blame for the total failure of the Detroit Police Department to the Federal government for not sending troops sooner to police Detroit. Commissioner Witherspoon alleged that he had not been given information by the Federal authorities that a Presidential proclamation was necessary before Federal troops could be brought in. He sought also to prove that the police had been blameless. But this assertion was negated by photographs taken by the Detroit *Free Press* and other newspapers. Most revelatory of these is one taken on Woodward Avenue during the day of June 21st. An elderly Negro's arms are pinioned by two policemen while two mounted police sit astride their horses immediately behind. In the meantime, a white rioter strikes the helpless Negro full in the face with no indication on the part of any of the four policemen of any effort to protect the Negro.

The Detroit *Free Press* also took photographs of the same man in four separate acts of mob violence. As this report is written, this easily identified rioter is unarrested. Two other photographs show another white man engaged in two separate acts of violence against Negroes. In one of them he is about to strike a fleeing Negro with an iron bar. It is stated that this man was arrested but released almost immediately "for lack of evidence."

The faces of between 800 and 1,000 white rioters engaged in assaulting, killing, kicking or otherwise violating the law against the persons of Negroes, or engaged in wilful destruction of property such as the overturning and burning of the automobiles of Negroes are clearly identifiable. But as of the date of the writing of this report, few if any, of them have even been arrested.

The anti-Negro motivation of the Detroit police department is further illustrated by these facts and figures. It has already been pointed out that the Negro population of Detroit at the time of the riot was 200,000 or less, out of a total population of more than 2,000,000. The inevitable riot was the product of anti-Negro forces which had been allowed to operate without check or hindrance by the police over a period of many years. But 29 of the 35 persons who died during the riot were Negroes. An overwhelming majority of the more than 600 injured were Negroes. Of the 1832 persons arrested for rioting, more than 85% were Negroes. And this in the face of the indisputable fact that the aggressors over a period of years were not Negroes but whites.

Commissioner Witherspoon along with Attorney General Herbert J. Rushton, State olice Commissioner Oscar C. Olander, and Wayne County Prosecutor William E. Dowling were appointed by Governor Harry S. Kelly to investigate the riot. But a few days later, the investigating committee reported that there was no necessity of a Grand Jury investigation.

YOUTH OF WHITE RIOTERS

One of the most disturbing phenomena of the riot was the extreme youth of many of the rioters. The Detroit Free Press quoted Bugas, head of the Detroit Office of the FBI, as stating that seventy per cent of the rioters were boys between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five. Other observers estimate a somewhat lower percentage; but most are agreed, and their opinions are borne out by newspaper photographs of the rioters, that not less than fifty per cent of the rioters were boys and young men of this age and white women. What is perhaps a new and exceedingly dangerous factor in periods of emotional strain caused by war is indicated by the youth of the rioters. A few of them are not in the army because of deferments gained by industrial skills. But most of them fall into two categories. The first is made up of those who for physical, mental or moral reasons have been rejected by the armed services. A compensatory bravado seems to have been created in some of these young men who by the psysical violence of mobbing sought to convince themselves and others that they were as physically able as those who had gone into the army. The most staple young men of their age having been syphoned off into the Army, Navy and other armed services, the restraining influence of the more normal had been removed from those left behind.

The second category seems to have been made up of those between fifteen and eighteen who are emotionally unstable because they know that should the war last longer they will go into the armed services. All soldiers know that when one goes into the war he may not return. Even if he does, whatever plans he may have made for the charting of his life will be interrupted and perhaps materially changed. The stabilizing influence of plans having been removed, it appears that there is an even greater willingness to indulge in physical violence when fear of punishment is removed, such as in a race riot. It is conceivable that other riots during the war and the immediate years thereafter may be distinctly affected by this wartime phenomenon.

THE PRESS

The Hearst-owned Detroit *Times* has for years featured crime, real or alleged, by Negroes and has been distinctly unfriendly in its attitude towards the Negro and his aspirations. But it was quick to characterize the riot of June 20-21 as "the worst disaster which has befallen Detroit since Pearl Harbor." The conservative Detroit *News* has been apathetic though not unfriendly. The Detroit *Free Press,* prior to its purchase by John B. Knight, followed the same pattern. But since its acquisition by Mr. Knight and under the editorship of Douglass Martin and Malcolm Bingay, it has followed an objective and enlightened attitude on the issue of race. It has featured news about Negro achievement such as the visit of the distinguished Negro agronomist, Dr. George Washington Carver, to Detroit at the invitation of Henry Ford, and the death of Dr. Carver. Its coverage of the riot was full, fair, and complete, both in its news, editorial and pictorial treatment. The attitude of the *Free Press* did much to restore sanity to the city.

Three widely-circulated Negro newspapers, the Michigan *Chronicle*, the Detroit *Tribune*, and the Detroit edition of the Pittsburgh *Courier*, have given full coverage during recent years to the favorable and unfavorable changes in the Negro's status in Detroit. This in large measure has contributed to a very well-informed opinion by Negroes.

THE MAYOR

During his term as president of the Detroit Council of Churches, Dr. Benjamin Bush and other Protestant ministers and laymen of both races had sought action by the City of Detroit to avert the inevitable race clash which threatened the city. The Council had repeatedly urged Mayor Edward J. Jeffries to appoint an interracial committee and to give that committee sufficient authority to tackle some of the problems of housing, police efficiency, employment, recreation and education which affected both Negroes and whites in Detroit, and the relations between the races. But Mayor Jeffries refused to act giving as his reason that such recognition of the existence of the problem might conceivably accentuate it. Six days after the riot, however, Mayor Jeffries appointed an interracial commission with William J. Norton of the Children's Fund as chairman. But Mr. Norton had served as chairman of a committee of the Detroit Urban League to investigate an interracial clash in the Northwestern High School in 1941. The report of that committee, most modest in its analysis of the problems involved and its recommendations, was neither acted upon nor even made public by the Mayor.

It would be a mistake to classify Mayor Jeffries as being anti-Negro.

His failure to meet the crisis or to take action on conditions which inevitably were leading to a crisis was due to weakness, lack of vision, and to political ambition. It is known that he aspired to be Governor of Michigan or United States senator. With such ambition, he hesitated to offend any politically important group in the city of Detroit or the State of Michigan. In the meantime, the dry grass of race hatred mounted, waiting only until a spark set off a conflagration.

NATIONAL ASPECTS

The War Production Board on June 26 announced that more than one million man hours of production were lost forever during the riot. No figures are available of the man hours previously lost by work stoppages and slow down strikes to keep Negroes from being employed or upgraded. As the chief war production center of the country, the pattern of behaviour there has affected and will continue to affect other war production centers. Failure to correct conditions similar to those in Detroit, or failure by federal, state, and municipal governments to act against those who, deliberately or unwittingly, foment similar racial and industrial clashes cannot but jeopardize the winning of the war. General Dwight Eisenhower reported in the spring of 1943 that photographs of the Sojourner Truth Riot were used by Axis propagandists in North Africa to create prejudice against the United States. The same riot and the one of June, 1943, as well as stories of lynchings,

attacks upon Negro soldiers, continued discrimination and segregation in the armed forces of the United States, the anti-Negro fulminations of men like Governor Talmadge of Georgia and Congressman Rankin of Mississippi are grist to the mill of the Tokio and Berlin radios which cite these outrages to the one billion brown, yellow, and black peoples of the Pacific and Africa, and to the millions of colored peoples of the Caribbean and South America as evidence of what will happen to these colored peoples if the United Nations win. Timorousness in attacking the problem and cowardice in surrender to the divisive forces of Detroit and other cities may conceivably cause the United States to lose the war or, most certainly, to prolong it unnecessarily at the sacrifice of the lives of American soldiers who would not otherwise die. One of the few bright spots of the Detroit riot has been the almost universal condemnation of the riot by Detroit members of the armed services. Typical of many of these is the following letter written by Corporal James E. Ferriero from the Station Hospital at Camp Crowder, Mo., to the Detroit *Times*, appearing in its issue of July 6, 1943:

"Why are these race riots going on there in Detroit and in other cities in this land—supposedly the land of freedom, equality and brotherhood?

"We who are doing the fighting, and will do the fighting to preserve this country from such acts of discrimination; we who recognize no discrimination in the trenches and fox-holes; we shed the same blood—one kind of blood—red. Things like race riots and strikes make us fighters think—WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

"Americanism means everything to us, but it is swiftly turning to be an unfounded word. Regardless, we will continue to fight, to die for our loved ones. But we want to feel and know that we are fighting for the principles that gave birth to the United States of America.

"In this hospital ward, we eat, laugh, and sleep uncomplainingly together. Jim Stanley, Negro; Joe Wakamatau, Japanese; Eng Yu, Chinese, John Brennan, Irish; Paul Colosi, Italian; Don Holzheimer, German; Joe Wojiechowski, Polish; and Mike Cohen, Jewish.

"We were all injured in the line of duty. Yes—Hitler, Mussolini, Hirohito, all rub their fists in glee that their fifth column work of undermining our country is bearing fruit. Things like this prolong the war, and give the Axis time to strengthen their forces. They might possibly mean DEFEAT for us. Now more than ever we should pull together, and work side by side, unhampered by riots and strikes. We want to know that you are behind us 100 per cent. We want to know you want us back regardless of creed, race, or color.

"We want to know so that we can fight harder and, if need be, die willingly."

THE REMEDY

The Detroit branch of the NAACP has submitted to the Mayor's Committee the following program of action:

STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MAYOR'S COMMITTEE

We commend the Mayor for his appointment of a Commission to study racial problems, and urge that the Commission begin work immediately. That there immediately be provided:

1. Such assistance as the commission might need by way of research.
2. Funds for its work be provided through the Mayor's office or through the Common Council.
3. Agencies of propaganda, education, and other media be immediately placed at the disposal of the Commission.
4. Executive assistance and proper personnel.
5. Power of subpoena and access to all necessary records.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

We recommend an immediate grand jury investigation of the Police Department to determine the causes for its failure during the past crisis; that all persons within the department found to have affiliations or sympathy with the Ku Klux Klan, National Workers League, or any other such organization; especially those that are guilty of non-feasance, mis-feasance, or nal-feasance while on duty, be dismissed.

For a long time we have recognized, and on numerous occasions pointed out, the inadequate number of colored policemen; that Negroes have confidence and faith in their officers and respect them.

We recommend that the number of Negro officers be increased from 43 to 350; that there be immediate promotions of Negro officers in uniform to positions of responsibility; that there be at least one Negro inspector, that a race relations division of the Police Department be created composed of officers with experience and education to form a smoother working body within the department. We further recommend a commission of Negro and white laymen to serve jointly with a group of Negro and white policemen and officers to work toward immediate restoration of confidence in the department.

RECREATION

For years it has been apparent that Detroit's recreation facilities were inadequate to meet the need.

We recommend the following:

1. That all school grounds in congested areas be immediately made available for leisure-time activity.

2. That recreation leaders be employed to take over these newly opened fields.

3. That community agencies implement the Recreation Department to provide clean, wholesome fun this summer, especially should the churches

turn to opening centers in their basements or on other property that is available and properly supervised.

4. That in congested areas where problems of delinquency have reached saturation point and inter-racial feeling is high, special workers be employed immediately to co-ordinate and correlate civic, social, church and community programs.

5. That emergency funds be released by the Common Council for this purpose if such funds are not available in the Recreation Commission's budget.

6. That special funds be released or made available by churches and other agencies to meet their portion of this emergency program.

7. That special attention be given in a recreational program to the problems of so-called "jitterbugs and hoodlums" who are in great need of constructive activity under competent leadership.

8. To create a better understanding between young people who at tender ages are unaware of the significance of this problem of racial antagonism, we recommend that all organizations, such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Y.M.C.A., Board of Education, Urban League, Church, etc., maintaining summer camps, immediately plan to include children of ALL RACES in their summer program, so that in addition to a summer of fun, special attention may be given to the problem of living together.

EDUCATION

The repercussions of the present racial conflict will not have effect in the schools until fall. During the summer vacation period there is time for constructive planning and preparation for a program to be launched in the fall. We recommend and urge that the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools evaluate the school system to determine whether it is prepared to meet the need for racial adjustments. We further recommend:

1. That more Negro teachers be employed and placed throughout the school system on an integrated basis.

2. That Negro teachers be advanced according to experience and training; that qualified Negro teachers be advanced to principalships.

3. That Negro teachers be placed on faculties of High Schools, and Negro Counselors be utilized in all mixed schools to counsel both Negro and white students.

4. That Negro professors be considered immediately for appointment on the faculty of Wayne University—a municipal University.

5. That the Board of Education and the schools through their Social Science Departments include study units on the subject of racial unity.

6. That in future elections of members of the Board of Education the citizenry of Detroit consider the election of a qualified Negro for the board to assure representation on the policy-making body.

HOUSING

Now is the time to reconsider living together. The riot has proven that segregation whether voluntary or involuntary, produces separateness and friction. On the other hand where people were living together in the City of Detroit, there was no friction.

We reiterate our position that public housing should be for all people regardless of race, creed, or color. We urge that the Detroit Housing Commission rescind is policy of not disturbing "neighborhood patterns", and open war housing projects to workers who qualify. We urge that additional housing be considered and built immediately; that a request be made to the President of the United States and other Federal officials to grant priorities on building materials as a war measure to provide adequate housing. We contend that housing for war workers is as necessary to the war effort as camps for the armed forces.

LABOR

Because a large number of workers will be affected by events of the past few days, the rank and file of labor must make some plans for adjustment.

We recommend:

1. That inter-racial commissions be set up in all locals in which a mixed labor force is employed.

2. That inter-racial committees of international unions be activated where they are already in existence by launching a program of education and adjustment to problems of racial-differences.

3. That there be a coordinated inter-racial labor commission composed of representatives of labor organizations, the AFL, CIO, and independent unions. Such commission representatives are to be appointed by heads of respective organizations, and these in turn correlated by program and activity with plant committees.

4. That trade unions in cooperation with management immediately develop a sound, intelligent, and over-all program, for the complete integration of workers of minority groups into industry.

REPARATIONS

We urge that the City Government immediately take steps to make reparations for the loss of life, limb, and property in Detroit.

We also urge that an inter-racial committee be set up by the Mayor to receive and adjust claims.

Because there are at least seventeen cities in which identical conditions such as those which preceded the riot in Detroit can cause similar outbreaks of racial hatred resulting in loss of life and of war production, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People submitted on June 29th the following program to President Roosevelt for federal action both with respect to Detroit and to other cities:

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT
FROM
WALTER WHITE, SECRETARY,
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF COLORED PEOPLE.

Re: Epidemic of Race Riots

Causes

The active agents fomenting race riots in Detroit and other places are revealed by extensive investigation to be chiefly the following:

1. Southern whites who have migrated to industrial centers, Northern and Southern, who resent Negroes working at the same jobs and wages as whites, being permitted to vote, and accorded other privileges:

2. Organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, the National Workers' League, the Southern Voters League, the Black Legion, Southern societies of various states, and others which, though numerically small, are active and effective in rousing anti-Negro, anti-Semitic, and other prejudices:

3. Timorousness and inefficiency of various police forces and city administrations.

4. The demagogy of men like Congressman Rankin of Mississippi.

5. The coalition of Southern Democrats and conservative Northern Republicans who are anti-Roosevelt, anti-labor, anti-Semitic, anti-Negro, and anti-liberal generally.

Results

Detroit, Beaumont, Mobile, Los Angeles, Newark, and other riots clearly manifest the necessity of action by the federal government.

In some seventeen or more industrial centers, the elements of racial explosions as great or even greater than at Detroit are present. The War Production Board estimates that the Detroit riot has already cost more than one million man hours. If for no other reason than as a war emergency, the utmost in federal action must be taken to prevent further impairment of the war efforts.

The recommendations which follow are made specifically with respect to the Detroit situation, but most of them are applicable to the country at large:

1. We again urge you to go on the air in a fireside chat to appeal to the people of the country to refrain from rioting or racial hatred. If it is proper for us to make suggestions, it would be well in our opinion to stress the global nature of this problem of race and point out how our enemies are utilizing riots, lynchings, and other manifestations of racial and religious prejudice in this country against us which will inevitably lengthen the war, cost us the lives of American boys and make the winning of a durable peace all the more difficult.

2. Federal troops must be kept in Detroit to prevent the repetition of rioting. Negroes are embittered at the way in which they were treated, many of them being shot in the back. They resent the enormously disproportionate number of Negro deaths, arrests, convictions, and property losses, when they constitute less than one-tenth of the population. On the other side of the picture, many white Detroiters, especially Southerners and Polish and Italian Catholics having had a taste of blood are eager to "finish the job." It is my measured opinion that only the presence of federal troops for some time can avert further trouble, deaths, and bloodshed. We would strongly recommend that even after the danger seems to be passed some troops be kept in Detroit until cold weather comes when the populace cannot congregate in streets, parks, and other public places.

3. We very strongly urge a Federal Grand Jury investigation, particularly of possible violation by the Police Department of Section 52 of the United States Criminal Code. This Federal Grand Jury should be directly under Washington and not under the local United States Attorney who is not very strong.

4. We urge Federal Grand Jury investigation of the possible misfeasance, nonfeasance, or malfeasance in protection of Federal rights of citizens of Mayor Edward J. Jeffries, and other members of the Detroit City Administration under the above law.

5. We urge Federal Grand Jury investigation of the conduct of the Michigan State Police. One of them, Ted Anders, shot a Negro, Julian Witherspoon, in the St. Antoine YMCA following which he and his companions acted in most vicious fashion towards residents of this institution. Other members of the state police are charged by Negro residents of the Vernor Apartments with having robbed their homes of money, perfumes, liquors, and other possessions.

6. Workers in one Detroit plant which is exclusively devoted to production of war materials and the filling of government contracts have reported to us that for several weeks past some of the white workers in the plant have been making daggers out of tool steel, doing so during regular working hours. These reports are being investigated. We urge that inquiry be made by the appropriate Federal investigating agency of the appropriation or destruction of war materials used in the riot. We suggest that such investigation be undertaken for the purpose of prosecution under the Federal Sabotage Act.

7. We recommend introduction and passage of legislation to make violence against members of the armed forces and violence to prevent minority groups from performing war work a federal offense.

8. Orders should be issued by the Navy Department and strictly enforced regarding the conduct of sailors at the Naval Training Station at Belle Isle in Detroit. We are informed that ever since this training station was established there about three years ago some of the soldiers have adopted an attitude of resentment toward the use, particularly by Negroes of the bathing beach at Belle Isle. Numerous physical and verbal attacks by sailors

on Negroes have been reported. It is known that sailors participated in the rioting, though there was one notable instance of three sailors rescuing a Negro from a white mob.

We suggest, also, an investigation of the extent and nature of participation by sailors stationed a Belle Isle in the rioting and in incidents prior to the riot, which formed part of the basis for the subsequent riot.

9. We urge release by the federal government of building materials through the granting of priorities for the construction of homes, dormitories and other houses for war workers in the Detroit area and to such other industrial centers where there has been an abnormal influx of immigrants for work in war plants. 345,000 persons have moved to Detroit within the last fourteen months according to a statement made to me by Governor Harry S. Kelly, but with little additional housing. It is as essential to provide housing for workers manufacturing war goods as it is to provide camps for soldiers who use those goods.

In connection with housing, we particularly urge that the National Housing Administration and the Federal Public Housing Authority be obligated to cease and desist from discrimination on account of race, creed, color, or national origin in public housing erected wholly or in part by the Federal government. The vacillation, weakness, and surrender to a prejudiced minority in Detroit on the part of the National Housing Administration led to the Sojourner Truth riots and in large measure to the Detroit riots beginning on Sunday, June 20th.

10. We urge that the War Manpower Commission be obligated to live up to the injunction to permit no immigration to war industrial areas until the available local labor supply has been exhausted. Since July, 1940, there has been a total immigration in Detroit and Willow Run of more than 500,000 people. Failure of the War Manpower Commission to prohibit recruitment of workers elsewhere before all available local labor had been utilized resulted in an enormous and unnecessary strain on housing facilities in Detroit, and to the creation in part of conditions which led to the recent rioting.

11. We are happy to note that the Department of Justice has summoned all United States attorneys to meet in Philadelphia this week to discuss the obligation and duty of each of them to preserve civil rights of American citizens. We suggest that as far as law and propriety will permit, the Federal government through these and other agents assist in and insist upon the weeding out from city and state police forces members of the Ku Klux Klan, Nazi Bund, Black Legion, or any other anti-minority and anti-American organization.

12. Vacillation with respect to the Fair Employment Practice Committee, cancellation of the railroad, Mexican, and Detroit hearings, which was interpreted by many people to be weakening of the FEPC contributed materially to the belief by the anti-minority forces in Detroit that they had the Administration on the defensive. It emboldened them. It is imperative that vigor-

ous and unqualified support be given to the Fair Employment Practice Committee and the principle which it symbolizes to demonstrate to such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan that the FEPC will be given full administration support. We submit also that the provisions and sanctions of the Executive Orders 8802 and 9346 establishing FEPC should be extended so as to include employes as well as employers so as to prohibit discrimination by employes as well as by employers.

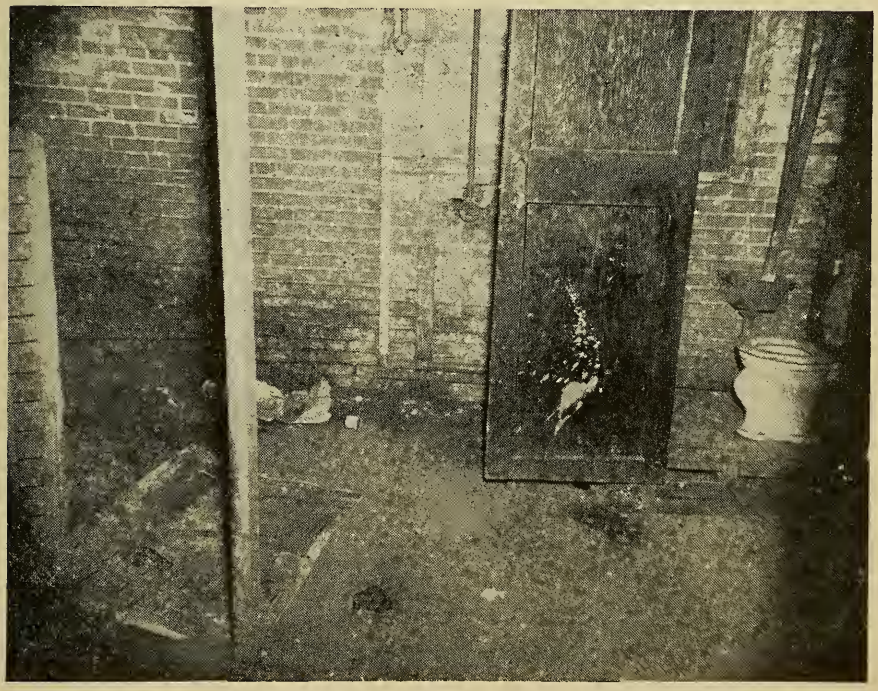
13. A vigorous campaign of affirmative propaganda through radio, moving pictures, posters and other media to educate the American people that people of all colors, races, and creeds are fighting this war. To accomplish this, the Administration should vigorously insist on the restoration of the domestic division of the Office of War Information, which is the logical agency to do this job. There should be added to the staff of the OWI experts in this field, and the OWI itself should be required to do a more vigorous job.

HOUSING IN DETROIT

This Detroit mother pays a monthly rental of $50 for these storefront living quarters. The following three pictures are of the same "home", typical of war crowded Detroit in 1943.

In the foreground is the portable zinc washtub used by this storefront lessee in the earning of her livelihood as a laundress.

Curtains and clothing are hung to form room partitions for a family of four.



No bathroom but a toilet is near the coal bin.

This is the exterior of a family dwelling for Negroes. This shack, typical of wartime housing in Detroit, was torn down during the week following the Detroit rioting.

RIOTING IN DETROIT

This hoodlum who also appears in the cover picture chasing a Negro with a lead pipe, is shown here attacking another Negro during the June 21-23 riots which cost 34 lives.

Using gutter fighting tactics of Hitler's mobsters against unionists and Jews in Germany, three Detroit hoodlums assault lone Negro. Man on ground clutches glasses in left hand. Note ring leader smoking cigarette.

Mobster assaults Negro held by police. On July 13 more than three weeks after the rioting, efforts of the NAACP achieved the arrest and 90 day sentence of this man, George Miller, a shoemaker. In the backgorund still leading the mob and unmolested by police, is the ringleader shown in assault picture on the preceding page. This man despite these pictures has not been apprehended.

ACTIVITIES OF POLICE DURING THE RIOTS JUNE 21 and 22, 1943

SECTION II

by THURGOOD MARSHALL

From June 24 to July 9, 1943, we maintained an emergency office at the St. Antoine Branch of the YMCA. In addition to myself, we used the services of two private investigators from New York City, one white and one Negro. During this period, we received all complaints that were brought to us and made several independent investigations. All of the material used in the following report is supported by affidavits, and these affidavits are available if desired.

This report is not meant to be complete, and only typical complaints are included. Some of the Negroes interviewed have refused to give details, and others have refused to sign statements for fear of reprisals from the local Police Department. This report is limited to the question of the Police Department and does not include the other circumstances surrounding the riots.

One of the important factors in any race riot is the local police. Very often disturbances reach riot proportions as a result of inefficiency on the part of the local police. The affidavits we have taken are more than sufficient to justify the calling of a special grand jury to investigate the nonfeasance and malfeasance of the police as a contributing factor in the Detroit riots.

The citizens of Detroit, white and Negro, are familiar with the attitude of the police as demonstrated during the trouble in 1942 surrounding the Sojourner Truth Housing Project. At that time a mob of white persons armed with rocks, sticks and other weapons attacked Negro tenants who were attempting to move into the Project. Police were called to the scene. Instead of dispersing the white mob which was unlawfully on property belonging to the Federal Government and leased to Negroes, they directed their efforts toward dispersing the Negroes who were attempting to get into their own homes. All Negroes approaching the Project were searched and their automobiles likewise searched. White people were neither searched nor disarmed by the police. This incident is typical of the one-sided law enforcement practiced by Detroit police. White hoodlums were justified in their belief that the Detroit police would act the same way in any future disturbances.

In the June riots of this year, the Detroit police ran true to form. The trouble reached riot proportions because the police of Detroit once again enforced the law under an unequal hand. They used "persuasion" rather than firm action with white rioters while against Negroes they used the ultimate in force; night sticks, revolvers, riot guns, sub-machine guns, and deer guns. As a result, 25 of the 34 persons killed were Negroes. Of the 25 Negroes killed, 17 were killed by police. The excuses of the Police Department for the disproportionate number of Negroes killed is that the majority of them

killed while committing felonies; namely, the looting of stores on Hastings Street. On the other hand, the crimes of arson and felonious assault are also felonies. It is true that some Negroes were looting stores on Hastings Street and were shot while committing these crimes. It is equally true that white persons were turning over and burning automobiles on Woodward Avenue. This is arson. Others were beating Negroes with iron pipes, clubs, and rocks. This is felonious assoult. Several Negroes were stabbed. This is assault with intent to murder.

All of these crimes are matters of record; many were committed in the presence of police officers, several on the pavement around the City Hall. Yet, the record remains, Negroes killed by police—17; white persons killed by police—none. Eighty-five percent of persons arrested were Negroes.

Evidence of tension in Detroit has been apparent for months. The *Detroit Free Press* sent a reporter to the police department. When Commissioner Witherspoon was asked how he was handling the situation, he told the reporter: "We have given orders to handle it with kid gloves. The policemen have taken insults to keep trouble from breaking out. I doubt if you or I could have put up with it." This weak-kneed policy of the police commissioner coupled with the anti-Negro attitude of many members of the force helped to make a riot inevitable.

SUNDAY NIGHT ON BELLE ISLE

Belle Isle is a municipally owned recreation park where thousands of white and Negro defense workers and their families go on Sundays for their outings. There had been isolated instances of racial friction in the past. On Sunday night, June 20th, there was trouble between a group of white and Negro people. The disturbance was under control by midnight. During the time of the disturbance and after it was under control, the police searched the automobiles of all Negroes and searched the Negroes as well. They did not search the white people. One Negro who was to be inducted into the Army the following week was arrested because another person in the car had a small pen knife. This youth was later sentenced to 90 days in jail before his family could locate him. Many Negroes were arrested during this period and rushed to local police stations. At the very beginning the police demonstrated that they would continue to handle racial disorders by searching, beating and arresting Negroes while using mere persuasion on white people.

THE RIOT SPREADS TO DETROIT PROPER

A short time after midnight disorder broke out in a white neighborhood near the Roxy Theatre on Woodward Avenue. The Roxy is an all night theatre attended by white and Negro patrons. Several Negroes were beaten and others were forced to remain in the theatre for lack of police protection. The rumor spread among the white people that a Negro had raped a white woman on Belle Island and that the Negroes were rioting.

At about the same time a rumor spread around Hastings and Adams Streets in the Negro area that white sailors had thrown a Negro woman and her baby into the lake at Belle Isle and that the police were beating Negroes. This rumor was also repeated by an unidentified Negro at one of the Negro night spots. Some Negroes began to attack white persons in the area. The police immediately began to use their sticks and revolvers against these Negroes. The Negroes began to break out the windows of stores of white merchants on Hastings Street.

The interesting thing is that when the windows in the stores on Hastings Street were first broken, there was no looting. An officer of the Merchants' Association walked the length of Hastings Street starting out at 7 o'clock Monday morning and noticed that none of the stores with broken windows had been looted. It is thus clear that the original breaking of windows was not for the purpose of looting. Throughout Monday the Detroit police, instead of placing policemen in front of the stores to protect them from looting, contented themselves with driving up and down Hastings Street from time to time and stopping in front of the stores. The usual procedure was to jump out of the squad cars with drawn revolvers and riot guns to shoot whoever might be in the store. The policemen would then tell the Negro bystanders to "run and not look back." On several occasions, persons running were shot in the back. In other instances, bystanders were clubbed by police. To the Detroit police, all Negroes on Hastings Street were "looters." This included war workers returning from work. There is no question that some Negroes were guilty of looting just as there is always looting during earthquakes or as looting occurred when English towns were bombed by the Germans.

Woodward Avenue is one of the main thoroughfares of the city of Detroit. Small groups of white people began to rove up and down Woodward Avenue beating Negroes, stoning cars containing Negroes, stopping streets cars and yanking Negroes from them, and stabbing and shooting Negroes. In no case did the police do more than try to "reason" with these mobs, many of which were at this stage quite small. The police did not draw their revolvers or riot guns, and never used any force to disperse these mobs. As a result of this, the mobs got larger and bolder and even attacked Negroes on the pavemen of the City Hall in demonstration not only of their contempt for Negroes, but of their contempt for law and order as represented by the municipal government. The use of night sticks or the drawing of revolvers would have dispersed these white groups and saved the lives of many Negroes. It would not have been necessary to shoot, but it would have been sufficient to threaten to shoot into the white mobs. The use of a fire hose would have dispersed many of the groups. None of these things were done and the disorder took on the proportions of a major riot. The responsibility of this rests with the Detroit police.

At the height of the disorder on Woodward Avenue, Negroes driving north on Brush Street (a Negro street) were stopped at Vernor Highway by a policeman who forced them to detour to Woodward Avenue. Many of

these cars are automobiles which appeared in the pictures released by several newspapers showing them overturned and burned on Woodward Avenue.

While investigating the riot, we obtained many affidavits from Negroes concerning police brutality during the riot. It is impossible to include the facts of all these affidavits. However, typical instances may be cited. A Negro soldier in uniform who had recently been released from the Army with a medical discharge, was on his way down Brush Street Monday morning, toward a theatre on Woodward Avenue. This soldier was not aware of the fact that the riot was still going on. While in the Negro neighborhood on Brush Street, he reached a corner where a squad car drove up and discharged several policemen with drawn revolvers who announced to a small group on the corner to run and not look back. Several of the Negroes who did not move quite fast enough for the police were struck with night sticks and revolvers. The soldier was yanked from the back by one policeman and struck in the head with a blunt instrument and knocked to the ground, where he remained in a stupor. The police then returned to their squad car and drove off. A Negro woman in the block noticed the entire incident from her window, and she rushed out with a cold, damp towel to bind the soldier's head. She then hailed two Negro Postal employees who carried the soldier to a hospital where his life was saved. There are many additional affidavits of similar occurrences involving obviously innocent civilians throughout many Negro sections in Detroit where there had been no rioting at all. It was characteristic of these cases that the policemen would drive up to a corner, jump out with drawn revolvers, striking at Negroes indiscriminately, ofttimes shooting at them, and in all cases forcing them to run. At the same time on Woodward Avenue, white civilians were seizing Negroes and telling them to "run, nigger, run." At least two Negroes, "shot while looting," were innocent persons who happened to be in the area at that time.

One Negro, who has been an employee of a bank in Detroit for the past eighteen years, was on his way to work on a Woodward Avenue street car when he was seized by one of the white mobs. In the presence of at least four policemen, he was beaten and stabbed in the side. He also heard several shots fired from the back of the mob. He managed to run to two of the policemen, who proceeded to "protect" him from the mob. The two policemen, followed by two mounted policemen, proceeded down Woodward Avenue. While he was being escorted by these policemen, the Negro was struck in the face by at least eight of the mob, and at no time was any effort made to prevent him from being struck. After a short distance this man noticed a squad car parked on the other side of the street. In sheer desperation, he broke away from the two policemen who claimed to be protecting him and ran to the squad car begging for protection. The officer in the squad car put him in the back seat and drove off, thereby saving this man's life. During all this time, the fact that the man was either shot or stabbed was evident because of the fact that blood was spurting from his side. Despite this obvious felony, committed in the presence of at least four policemen, no effort was made at that time either to protect the victim or since to arrest the persons guilty of the felony.

In addition to the many cases of one-sided enforcement of the law by the Detroit police, there is one glaring example of criminal aggression against innocent Negro citizens and defense workers by members of the Michigan State Police and Detroit Police.

VERNOR APARTMENTS

On the night of June 21st at about eight o'clock, a Detroit policeman was shot in the two hundred block of Vernor Highway, and his assailant who was in a vacant lot was, in turn, killed by another policeman. State and City policemen then began to attack the apartment building at 290 E. Vernor Highway, which was fully occupied by tenants. Search-lights were thrown on the building and machine guns, revolvers, rifles, and deer-guns, were fired indiscriminately into all of the occupied apartments facing the outside. Tenants of the building were forced to fall to the floor and remain there in order to save their lives. Later slugs from machine guns, revolvers, rifles, and deer-guns were dug from the inside walls of many of the apartments. Tear gas was shot into the building and all of the tenants were forced out into the streets with their hands up in the air at the point of drawn guns.

State and City policemen went into the building and forced out all of the tenants who were not forced out by tear gas. The tenants were all lined up against the walls, men and women alike, and forced to remain in this position for some time. The men were searched for weapons. During this time these people were called every type of vile name, and men and women were cursed and threatened. Many men were struck by policemen.

While the tenants were lined up in the street, the apartments were forcibly entered; locks and doors were broken. All of the apartments were ransacked. Clothing and other articles were thrown around on the floor. All of these things were done by policemen. Most of the tenants reported that money, jewelry, whiskey and items of personal property were missing when they were permitted to return to their apartments after midnight. State and City police had been in possession of the building during the meantime.

Many of these apartments were visited by the writer shortly after these events. They resembled a part of a battlefield. Affidavits from most of the tenants and lists of property destroyed and missing are available.

Although a white man was seen on the roof of an apartment house up the street from the Vernor Apartments with a rifle in his hand, no effort was made to either search that building or its occupants. After the raid on the Vernor Apartments, the police used as their excuse, the statement that policeman Lawrence A. Adams had been shot by a sniper from the Vernor Apartments, and that for that reason, they attacked the building and its occupants. However, in a story released by the Police Department on July 2 after the death of Patrolman Lawrence A. Adams, it was reported that "The shot that felled Adams was fired by Homer Edison, 28 years old, of 502 Montcalm, from the shadows of a parking lot. Edison, armed with a shot gun, was shot to death by Adams' partner." This is merely another

example of the clumsy and obvious subterfuges used by the Police Department in an effort to cover up their total disregard for the rights of Negroes.

Justification for our belief that the Detroit police could have prevented the trouble from reaching riot proportions is evidenced in at least two recent instances. During the last month in the town of Atlanta, Georgia, several white youths organized a gang to beat up Negroes. They first encountered a young Negro boy on a bicycle and threw him to the ground. However, before they could beat this lone Negro, a squad car drove up. The police promptly arrested several of the white boys, and dispersed the group immediately, thus effectively forestalling and preventing what might have resulted in a riot. On the Sunday preceding the Detroit riots, Sheriff Baird, of Wayne County, Michigan, with jurisdiction of the area just outside Detroit, suppressed a potential riot in a nearby town. A large group of Negroes and a large group of white people were opposing each other and mob violence was threatened. The sheriff and his deputies got between the two groups and told them that in case of any violence, the guilty parties would be handled, and that the law enforcement officers would do everything possible to prevent the riot. Because of this firm stand, the members of both groups dispersed.

If a similar affirmative action had been taken by the Detroit police when the small groups were running up and down Woodward Avenue beating, cutting and shooting Negroes, the trouble never would have reached the bloody and destructive magnitude which has shocked the nation.

One Negro living on Maple Street on Tuesday morning, June 22, while on his way to a confectionary store to purchase a bottle of milk, was seized by a policeman who, without words or provocation of any sort, began to beat the Negro and then took him in the squad car to the receiving hospital where his wounds were treated. While in the squad car, the officers told the Negro, "These people have been looking for trouble and now they're getting it." No charges of any kind were preferred against the victim.

Another Negro, employed by the Timken Axle Company, was seized on a corner near his house, severely beaten, and later charged with "disturbing the peace." (This man was beaten by three detectives.) When the victim tried to explain to the police that he needed medical attention, he was told "niggers don't need doctors." He was held in jail from Tuesday until Thursday without being fed, and was released by Judge Stein on Thursday.

Another Negro, seized on Tuesday at about 2 o'clock, was returning from work at the Ford Plant and was seized on Palmer Street by police officers with drawn revolvers and ordered to face the wall, where he was searched. The officers took from this man, a pen knife two inches long, and he was arrested. He was later released on Monday, June 28th.

On Monday between five and six in the evening, Ester Chapman, a Negro, was shot by police after being beaten with night sticks. Several eye witnesses have made affidavits that Chapman was not running, had made no move toward the police other than to walk, was not carrying packages or bags of any kind, but was shot for no reason at all.

The above digests of affidavits are a few of the more typical ones, and the complete file of affidavits is available provided a grand jury investigation is ordered. All of the persons making affidavits have indicated their willingness to testify in case of a grand jury investigation. If future riots and disorders in Detroit are to be avoided, it can only be done by a thorough far-reaching grand jury investigation.

One member of the white mobs, whose face appeared in at least four violent action pictures which have appeared several times in the daily press of Detroit, is well-known to police and has a police record, yet he was never arrested for his part in the Detroit riots. He has since left town after having seen two of his photographs placed again in the *Detroit Free Press.* This type of deliberate non-cation is typical of the Detroit Police Force.

The city of Detroit cannot accept responsibility for the wrongful actions of a large number of members of its police force except by a grand jury investigation and the prosecution of the guilty persons.

MICHIGAN STATE TROOPS

Several complaints concerning Michigan State Troops in Piquette Armory were investigated. During the week of June 21st, stones, cans, old locks, and other missiles were thrown from the windows of the armory by the troops stationed therein. Whenever Negroes passed something was usually thrown at them. At least two Negroes were injured by these missiles. Affidavits of one of the Negroes injured, and residents in the near vicinity are available.

The few Negro members of the Michigan State Troops were stationed in an area of Detroit where there was no friction or violence. The use of these Negro troops in other areas would have prevented much of the violence. It would have been a demonstration to the Negro members of the community of the faith of the government in Negro troops, and would likewise serve as an example to the white members of the community. Negro troops could have prevented much of the looting on Hastings street.

MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

Two incidents during the riot in which Michigan State Policemen were involved serve as examples of conduct which remains a disgrace to the State of Michigan.

Y. M. C. A.

On the night of June 22nd at about 10 o'clock, some of the residents of the St. Antoine Branch of the Y.M.C.A. were returning to the dormitory. Several were on their way home from the Y.W.C.A. across the street. State Police were searching some other Negroes on the pavement of the Y.M.C.A. when two of the Y.M.C.A. residents were stopped and reached for weapons. After none were found they were allowed to proceed to the building. Just as the last of the Y.M.C.A. men was about to enter the building, he heard

someone behind him yell what sounded to him like, "Hi, Ridley," (Ridley, is also a resident of the Y.) Another resident said he heard someone yell what sounded to him like, "Heil, Hitler."

A state policeman, Ted Anders, jumped from his car with his revolver out, ran to the steps of the Y.M.C.A., and put one foot on the bottom step and fired through the outside door. Immediately after firing the shot he entered the building. Other officers followed. Julian Witherspoon, who had just entered the building, was shot in the side by the bullet that was fired through the outside door and fell to the floor. There had been no show of violence or weapons of any kind by anyone in or around the Y.M.C.A.

The officers with drawn revolvers ordered all the residents of the Y.M.C.A., who were in the lobby of their building, to raise their hands in the air and line up against the wall like criminals. During all of this time these men were called "black bastards, monkeys" and other vile names by the officers. At least one man was struck, another was forced to throw his lunch on the floor. All of the men in the lobby were searched.

The desk clerk was also forced to line up. The officers then went behind the desk and into the private offices and searched everything. The officers also made the clerk open all locked drawers, threatening to shoot him if he did anything else.

Witherspoon was later removed to the hospital and has subsequently been released.

CONCLUSIONS

Several members of the Michigan State Police and many Detroit City Policemen have by their actions during the riot, created a feeling of distrust on the part of Negroes. This feeling can only be removed by affirmative action by the City and State against these officers.

Anti-Negro prejudice on the part of peace officers should not be tolerated at any time. During a riot such prejudice tends to add to existing trouble. One of the first steps toward preventing future riots must be a thorough and complete investigation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We respectfully make the following recommendations:

1. MICHIGAN STATE TROOPS

   (a) A departmental investigation of the action of the troops in the Piquette Armory.

   (b) More Negro members of the Michigan State Militia.

   (c) Use of Negro troops throughout the city including Negro neighborhoods.

2. MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

(a) Criminal prosecution of officer Ted Anders for his unprovoked shooting of Julian Witherspoon in the Y.M.C.A.

(b) A thorough investigation and open hearing into the conduct of Michigan State Police at the Y.M.C.A. and the Vernor Apartments.

(c) Appointment of qualified Negroes to the state police force.

3. DETROIT CITY POLICE

The Governor to use his influence in securing a grand jury investigation of the activities of members of the Detroit City Police during the riot.

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